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Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"
Third session
3-17 March 2000
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Letter dated 11 February 2000 from the President of the General Assembly to the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

I have the honour to write to you regarding the organization of the work of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

I should like to refer in particular to the number of plenary meetings to be held during the special session (Monday to Friday, 5 to 9 June 2000) and the organization of the list of speakers for the debate in plenary.

May I recommend the following for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the twenty-third special session.

It is my recommendation that the plenary hold 10 meetings over the five-day period, with two meetings per day, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. I should also like to propose that statements in the debate in plenary be limited to seven minutes. This arrangement would allow the plenary to hear Member States and observers who wish to participate.

* E/CN.6/2000/PC/1.

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On Monday morning, the General Assembly would hear 13 speakers only because organizational matters would take one hour. Subsequently, all morning meetings would feature 18 speakers, and all afternoon meetings 19 speakers. On the afternoon of Friday, in addition to final speakers in the debate, the Assembly would adopt the final document or documents.

I also recommend that the list of speakers for the debate in plenary be created by a drawing of lots. This system worked very well for the past three special sessions and I recommend that it also be used for the twenty-third special session.

I should like to propose that precedence in the speaking order be given to Heads of State, Vice-Presidents, Crown Princes or Princesses and Heads of Government and that they have equal standing as regards the list of speakers. Then Ministers/Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Chairmen of Delegation/Vice-Ministers and Chairmen of Delegation would be given the floor.

A meeting for the purpose of creating the list of speakers would be held on Wednesday, 26 April 2000. The Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would preside over the meeting and would draw names of Member States from two boxes. The first box (from which names would be drawn first) would contain the names of the Member States that had informed the secretariat of the Assembly, in writing, no later than two days before the meeting, that their speaker would be a Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince/Princess or Head of Government. The second box would contain the names of other Member States.

When called, the representative of the Member State would approach the podium, where 10 boxes representing the 10 meetings would be displayed. The representative would be asked to draw, from the box representing the preferred meeting, a chip showing the number of the speaking slot, and would also be asked to indicate the level of representation of the speaker. This information would be recorded by the Secretariat.

Subsequently, the Secretariat would publish the list reflecting the results of the drawing of lots, but rearranged to reflect the precedence outlined above. Exchanges of speaking slots between delegations will be possible. However, were the exchange to involve a speaker in the Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince/Princess or Head of Government category and a speaker in any other category, then the speaker in the former category would be moved to the last position available in that category, and the speaker in the latter category would be moved to the last position available in that category.

Should the level of representation of a delegation change from the Head of State, Vice-President, Crown Prince/Princess or Head of Government category to any other category, then the speaker would go to the last position for Member States in the list of speakers for the debate in plenary at the last plenary meeting.

I should like to propose that observers be allowed to make statements in the debate in plenary. I recommend that the practice of the General Assembly be followed whereby observers are included in the list of speakers after all Member States. Inclusion of observers in the list of speakers could be done on a first-come first-served basis, by contacting the secretariat of the Assembly. Pursuant to Assembly resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998, Palestine would participate in the

drawing of lots so that it could be determined at which meeting it would be the last speaker.

If these recommendations are acceptable to the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the twenty-third special session, they should be incorporated in its report to the General Assembly at its special session.

I should like to request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the preparatory committee and welcome your comments and thoughts on the arrangements proposed herein.

(*Signed*) Theo-Ben **Gurirab**